

## [George S. Stiers]

Life History Range lore

The J. A. Ranch, an Indian Cowboy Saddle Bum.

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Rangelore

Tarrant County, Dist. # 7.

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George S. Stiers, 73, inmate Tarrant County Home, born on Pine Ridge, Indian Reservation, So. Dak., Jan. 8, 1864. Of Canadian-French and Indian descent he attended Catholic Mission School for 8 years on the reservation. At 15 became a Pony Express rider out of Ft. Dodge until 1881, was a Government Scout through 1884; worked as a [?] cowhand in Texas and Colorado until 1891 when he joined the Buffalo Bill circus for six years in a shooting act; from 1898-1905 made 2 reel Western movies with Wm. S. Hart, later followed the vaudeville circuit until 1927.

"I was born Jan. 8, 1864 on the Pine Ridge Reservation in So. Dak.. My mother named me Tella Wabasha, which are the Indian words for Red Wolf. The Indian custom was to name the child after the mother. Mother was a Sioux Indian and grand-daughter of Chief Sitting Bull. Her mother was the Chief's daughter. Father was a French-Canadian. I was born in an Indian teepee, reared in a teepee and lived the native life of the Indians until I reached the age of 15. . . .

. . ."During the time I rode for the Pony Express and did scout duty I saw lots of cattle and cowhands because that section of the country was loaded with critters on the range. That

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is where water holes existed. Seeing the cowhands and watching them work caused me to get a hankering for the cattle business. I had heard of Charley Goodnight's range and decided to drag fro Texas and I lit in West Texas on the JA that belonged to Goodnight and Adair; it was in 1878. I stayed in the cattle work for a spell of years and worked [?] for a number of outfits but the JA was one of the best outfits I connected with. It was next to the Eddy outfit in Colorado. C.12 - 2/11/41 - Texas 2 "No matter where I went and I have been over a tolerable lot of the country here and foreign, too. Wherever the name of Goodnight was mentioned in connection with the West and the cattle business the boys would doff their conk cover to Goodnight. They all agreed that he knew more about cows, knew more about the West than is in the books. He was as square as a man can be made and was game form the toes up to the top of his conk. Goodnight had the top rawhides working for him and a square bunch. He would not keep a crook or a drinking man around the place. There was Johny Come Lately, the cooky, a real camp belly-cheater. He was a sour-dough and whistle-berry artist. John Mann the wagon boss was reckoned by everybody as the top in his line. Jack Campbell the trail boss was another top hand. There was Jim Own, Jim Mitchell, Club Foot Jack, Jess Steen and Ed Jones, part Cherokee Indian, that now lives in Fort Worth, all them boys were tops.

"I know what I am prattling about because I have seen them all. Top hands made their living showing their ability to the public and the JA boys runs along with the best and all had what it takes to make a cowhand —guts.

"I [eant?] to cite an incident that took place with a bunch of us JA waddies. A few of us were given riding orders to work a round-up near Mobettie which is N. by E. of the main ranch. In them days Mobeetie was talked about as holding some of the toughest of the tough buckaroos. Fellows that lived on gambling and anything else that they could find to do did not call for muscle action. 3 "Bud Roberts had a buckskin hoss that looked like a chunk of dog meat rolled in some hoss hide but it had the running works and the guts to do ti. There were several hosses a rounge there that folks thought could run and we had several races during the spell we stayed there getting the herd together. Sleepy, that was

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the hoss's name and pitted the hosses that the gamblers had for taking in the rawhides. I rode Sleepy for Bud because I was a light weight and knew how to help a hoss do its best. I learned to rider while still a kid on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Sleepy and I took the jack away form the gamblers. In all the dozen or so races that we had there I never lost one. We just kept the gamblers bringing on better hosses trying to get their money back. I never drove Sleepy faster than necessary to stay in front about a length. It was a hoss that could pick up speed fast so I was playing safe if the other hoss showed a sudden burst of speed. I knew that Sleepy could take it away. The time came when we were ready to drift the cattle to headquqrters and still had the gamblers jack in our pants. That hurt the gamblers pride. We got wind that they were going to interfer with our herd claiming critter in it for an excuse to pick a fight and stick us up.

“We were about ready to start the herd at sunup in the morning when a party of men on hosses came claiming that we had some of their critters in the herd and insisted that they were going to out them out. The critters were all pure and we had it. Goodnight would make every mother's son of us hit the drag if we came in with any other kind. Jim Mitchell paid them no mind just as though they were a bunch of 4 buzzards and went on about his work and yelled drifting orders. Club Foot Jack was sitting on his hoss sort of lop sided so he could face the gamblers chawing on a hunk of 'baccy. He squinted one eye and squirted a gob of juice and said, “Any of ye kubkaroos hankering to be branded for the eternal range just move towards then critters. We are hankering for ye to start. The first skunk that starts will get branded sure as hell.” Not a move was made by the gambling gentry and the herd drifted slowly out on the trail. That incident will give you an idea what kind of men was with the JA outfit.

“The hardest going I had on the JA outfit was laying out watching for rustlers. There was a spell when the gentry were quite pert with their work gathering critters with the other fellow's brand. During one of these times I layed out all night when it was sleeting. My cover was a blanket and a slicker over that. I arose at the end of my shift with an inch of ice all over me. When I got up it cracked and tumbled off me but I was as warn as a piece

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of toast inside of that shell. Rustlers were made sort of quick work in those days. What was done when they were caught with rustled critters was to hang them up to dry and if there was no limb handy they would be given a short course in citizenship. I have seen several with bullet hole on the bodies and the buzzards having a good feed.

"About the feed we waddies lived on I can say it was plenty and the kind that puts leaf lard on the clats. It was mostly beef off a fat yearling and some wild game the boys would kill, dried fruit and some vegetables out of the can. Goodnight called for the best from his hadns and he gave them the best he could in return. He always 4 paid top wages. I received \$35 a month for work that most outfits only paid \$30.

"When I quit the JA went to Charley Goodnight and told him, "I am quitting and saying goodbye to a square outfit." He him held my hand for a minute and sez, "Chief I'm saying goodbye to a good Indian and I don't mean a dead one. You can light here anytime you jiggle through." I jiggled out to the Pecos country working first for one and then another outfit. That country was some tough and after my spell with the JA outfit the Pecos styled did not set well with me. The rangers were in there trying to clean it up and had been for quite a spell. The folks took the matter as sort of a joke. They could tell as a joke that the rangers cleared the range of bad men in a certain section and had them all rounded up. When they tried to get a jury to try the men there was not enough other folks left to form a jury. I wanted to see the country so became a saddle bum, a chuck line rider for a spell. Them days it was no trouble to live and line your flue just going form one outfit to another. Any place you would stop the first thing the ramrod would say was "Light and cool your saddle and line your flue." One could stay a good spell and be welcome,

"After a year as a saddle bum I hit for Colorado and there joined the Year Brand outfit sometimes called the Chauvenett range.